



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
370 L'Enfant Promenade, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20447

March 7, 1997

Dear Colleague:

The Child Care Bureau and the Office of Child Support Enforcement, both of the Administration for Children and Families, are promoting collaboration between the child care and child support enforcement programs. The child care and child support enforcement programs serve many of the same children and families. These programs play important roles in promoting self-sufficiency for families, especially in light of Federal and State welfare reform initiatives.

Child support enforcement services can give a custodial parent much needed financial and medical support from the non-custodial parent. The increased income from child support helps many families pay for child care, including higher quality child care than they would otherwise be able to afford. In many cases, child support services can also mean that a child enjoys emotional support and love from both parents. We have enclosed a fact sheet which provides more detail about child support enforcement services.

To date, our child care/child support collaboration efforts have included joint sessions at national conferences and newsletter articles. In addition, representatives from our offices recently met with the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies to discuss possible outreach initiatives.

We know that many of you are already collaborating with your State's child support enforcement program. The joint session of State child care and child support enforcement administrators at the recent American Public Welfare Association (APWA) meeting in Phoenix was a good example of existing efforts. We are now asking every child care program to join this initiative. Below are some specific ideas on ways you may wish to proceed, based on practices many child support and child care programs already have in place.

1. Outreach/Referral Activities. Child care consumer education and resource and referral agencies can provide information to parents about paternity establishment and child support enforcement. By providing this information to parents, the child care community can help ensure that parents are able to make informed choices. In addition, we encourage you to establish procedures for referring families to the

appropriate child support enforcement office. Your State or local child support enforcement office should be able to provide informational materials for you to distribute as well as a list of phone numbers and addresses for referrals.

2. Policy Development. We encourage you to collaborate with your State's child support enforcement agency on policy issues which affect both the child care and child support programs. For example, each State has guidelines for determining the amount of child support awards. Under Federal law, the State must review, and revise if appropriate, the guidelines at least once every four years. As part of this periodic review process, you may be able to work with your child support enforcement agency to examine how your State's guidelines deal with child care costs, child care subsidies, and dependent care tax credits. Likewise, you can involve the State child support enforcement agency when developing policy for how custodial parents' child support income will be treated in eligibility determinations for child care subsidies.

We urge you to meet with your State child support enforcement director to discuss specific activities regarding both outreach/referral and policy development. Enclosed is a list of State child support enforcement administrators. In addition, please alert the child care community, including providers and resource and referral agencies, about this initiative and their role in it. Members of the child care community can work with representatives from local child support enforcement agencies to set up referral arrangements, distribute outreach materials, and speak with parents and providers about child support services.

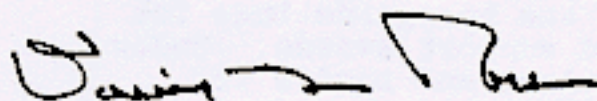
As we jointly invite your help to promote collaboration between child care and child support, we want to assure you --as we did the State child support enforcement administrators in a similar letter-- of our joint commitment to assist you. Federal regional child care and child support staffs share this commitment. They invite your calls for assistance and are interested in learning about success stories you want to share with us. We are interested in showcasing in the Child Care Bulletin best practices under this initiative.

Finally, collaboration between child care and child support enforcement, while important, should only be one part of a larger collaboration effort. A similar initiative between child support enforcement and Head Start is already beginning to show good results. All relevant agencies --including agencies that administer Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, health programs, and education-- need to work together to ensure a coordinated approach to serving families.

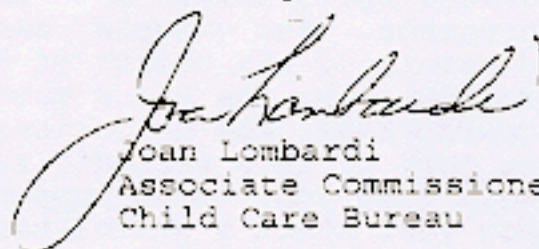
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As a child care administrator, you understand how low-income families struggle to pay for child care, food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and other necessities. We thank you on behalf of the many parents and their children whose lives will be strengthened through your participation in this initiative.

Sincerely,



David Gray Ross
Deputy Director
Office of Child Support
Enforcement



Joan Lombardi
Associate Commissioner
Child Care Bureau

Enclosures

cc: ACF Regional Administrators